

TAIG

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Chairman Steve Crowley 937-1001 Tr Jim Dahlberg 432-1963
Sec Mike Doleman 861-1893

Meeting Notes 1/31/82 It was noted that there is a backlog on dealers getting equipment from ATARI's distribution system.

Walt June of THE CODE ROOM had a 400 at the meeting all souped up with 48K RAM. As everyone could see it worked just fine. The 48K board made by INTEK is available from The Code Room for \$299.

The video tape shown at 6:00, which we recieved on loan from ATARI's group support program, had some good points and some bad points. The good points were that it did a good job introducing the beginner to some concepts of how the ATARI does things, and it represents a much appreciated effort by ATARI to help user groups like us. The bad points were that it was to short and dissapointed those who expected Cris Crawford to actually explain the technicals of how to. Maybe next time.

You can call 376-1118 to find out how to get MECC software.

Service report. A 400 was sent to ATARI last Nov., no results yet. Computer Castle A+, Daytons exchanged a defective board-no questions.

Tech Associates is looking for someone to convert Apple to ATARI, also is looking for programs to market. call Candice Keyser 739-4939, or Earl Keyser 429-5570 for more info.

G.T.I.A Explained

Atari has finally started to ship the elusive GTIA chip in the new Atari 800/400's, and the GTIA upgrade will soon be available at service centers for a measly \$23.00. (Mind you, installation might be extra!)

What is the GTIA chip? For the thirtieth time, it is an upgraded graphics chip for the Atari that allows you to use graphics modes 9, 10, and eleven as they were meant. The resolution is still a relative blocky 80x192, but the colors and the luminances work.

One thing that makes the GTIA so special, is it gives the Atari a graphics mode comparable to the Apple's 16 color 10-res. Now you are not limited to plotting with 3 colors. Graphics 9, on the other hand, gives you a choice of 16 luminances of the background color. This is a special mode in the sense it is the only mode that the programmer has this extended selection. (At the next meeting, I'll try to bring our 800 with a program using the 16 luminance mode that shows 256 colors at once, using display list interrupts that change the background color 16 times over 16 luminance bars plotted vertically.) To boot, both these modes have over 8 times the resolution of the Apple's 10-res mode. (Graphics 11 with GTIA has twice the color resolution of the Apple III's!), allowing for really exotic designs.

Graphics 10 is the other graphics mode, 10, allows 9 colors and/or luminances. Here the programmer has advantages of the color registers. The additional 4 registers are shared with the player-missile graphics, a compromise. You can change the color of a figure drawn in a particular color instantly. In graphics 9 or 10 you would have to resort to primeval Apple logic and redraw the figure you wanted in the different color. A neat trick this mode facilitates is an effect achieved in the arcade game Stargate. Through the name Stargate colors are scrolled, as with the Atari logo, but vertically, not up and down. (It's beautiful, I never play the game, I just stare at the display.)

Before I quit, let's dispell a myth; the GTIA doesn't alter the display list. The display list is the same as graphics 8's, but the 3 MSB's of a hardware register, PRIOR, is poked with the appropriate number to tell GTIA how to interpret the display data that ANTIC fetches from memory. (Sorry about the buzzwords, they and some specifics about the GTIA are explained in detail in De Re Atari.)

If you are still with me, you should be wondering what would happen if PRIOR was poked the value that turned on, let's say, graphics 9. (PRIOR'S shadow register is actually poked. POKE 623, (15+(64-gr.9, 128-gr.11, or 192-gr.10) should tell you if there is a GTIA installed, the display should become blurry) If in graphics 0, the characters would become all blurred. There may be some combination of graphic mode/GTIA mode that looks neat; this is one area that needs exploration.

Magazine Reference

Analog

There all usually available on the front table at the meeting, This a cop-out, since I don't have access to them.

Byte

January "The Atari Tutorial, Part 5: Scrolling", p. 26 How programs like "Eastern Front" work.

February "The Atari Tutorial, Part 6: Atari BASIC", p. . The continuing saga of De Re Atari, focusing this month on how Atari BASIC works. (not for beginners)

Compute

December "Insight Atari (#2 in a series about the OS)", p. 89. How to use Atari's extended DOS in BASIC-how to do a DOS directory, and machine language. Very informative for intermediate and advanced programmers.

"Discovering Atari's "Hidden" Graphics", p. 98. An explanation of different colored characters in graphics 1 and 2.

"String Art", p.104.

Program that draws lines between two twisted lissajous figures. The effect soon becomes boring.

"Billard Bounce", p. 106.

Now tis is a nice display. Plots the path of a billard ball bouncing around the screen. This is one of the few programs worth typing in.

"Blinking Characters", p. 108.

A Simple program that enables blinking characters independently of the program-using vertical blank & a countdown timer... Another useful program.

"Make Your Atari Keyboard a Little Friendlier", p. 110.

Another neat program. It speeds up the key auto-repeat, makes the keyboard buzz if the clear, inverse, and delete. This would be a super program if you have a disk and put this program on an Autorun.Sys file. Someone out there should put the blinking character, keyboard handler, and any other system utilities in an Autorun.Sys file and put it in the free library. I'm sure many people would go for that.

"Adding High Speed Vertical Positioning To P/M Graphics", p.116.

Another machine language player missile positioning routine. Comes with a demonstration.

"A Poor Programmer's Word Processor", p. 122.

I agree, it is poor.

January "Cryptogram", p. 103.

A word game.

"SuperFont", p. 110.

It looks like the ultimate character set development utility.

"Word Search", p. 116

Creates a matrix of random letters embedded with words the user inputs. It's to the best advantage of anyone using this program to have a printer!

"Review: Screen Interface [Version 2.0] From Macrotronics" p. 118.

"Insight Atari", p. 120.

All about device handlers, and a brief history of Atari BASIC from one of its authors. As he says, it does overlap with De Re a little.

Februaru "Insight Atari", p. 90.

Using graphics in assembly language, and more facts about Atari BASIC.

"P/M Graphics Made Easy", p. 90.

The easiest way to use player-missile graphics through BASIC. Hopefull the last. (question-why do you think Atari left a memory gap between the beginning from PMBASE to the beginning of player1 display memory? Does it mean a new Antic chip will come along that uses that space? Why didn't Atari allow you to define PMBASE anywhere? Then, instead of moving the player/missile through ram, you could just place a differnt value in PMBASE, as in scrolling.) "Review: Eastern Front", p. 94.

"Review: Text Wizard", p. 96.

"Put Graphics Modes 1 And 2 At The Bottom Of Your Screen", p.100.

Simple manipulation of the display list.

"Atari Pilot At The Helm", p. 104.

The first artical I've seen about Pilot. Includes a Pilot program.

"Moire Magic", p. 112.

A long program. It is suppose to create interesting 3-d designs. (The following text is censored)

CENSORED

"Put A Rainbow In Your Atari", p. 114.

Do the Atari logo rain effect with any playfield. (Someone should modify the display list as to have a display list interrupt on every line, then have the interrupt service routine load a color from a look-up table, the hard part, to produce a solid ROYGBIV palette. With the GTIA'S shading capabilities added, just imagine...)

Creative Computing

February-I forgot.

March "New Rams for Old", p. 72.

Procedure for upgrading any remaining 8k boards to 16k. When will there be an article showing how to upgrade to 32k? 64k?

BEAM ME UP SCOTTY

You are put down on an alien complex. Your mission is to find all ten captive humans. This is the scenario for Rescue at Rigel. It is one of the Epyx series put out by Automated Simulations. It retails around \$30.00 in the stores. Rescue at Rigel is a graphic oriented adventure game. The movement is done with the keyboard. I see no reason they could not have used the joystick for the Atari version, but the program is written well. The game lasts from how long it takes you to be seriously wounded (you are then beamed up automatically) and 60 minutes. One interesting feature is that you don't always have to do battle with aliens. You can greet them and sometimes they will let you go on. I would recommend this to anyone with a 32K computer (you need more with a disk). I have to go now to rescue Delilah before she is turned into a tollah! Beam me down, Scotty!

Where's my Sword!

Hopefully you didn't forget it before you went into the cave complex in the Haunted Mountains. You will need it to recover the Datestones of Ryn. By now you probably know I am talking about Datestones of Ryn. It is one the many games put out by Automated Simulations. Pay \$20.00 to your computer dealer and take off on one the best adventures you've played. As Brian Hammerhand, you have about twenty minutes to recover the stones and leave the dungeon. Be careful though, the robbers are lurking in the corners and many monsters abound. You will need quick judgement and good agility to avoid Rex, their leader. However, when he's not around, maybe you can talk some crooks out of fighting you. This is probably the closest computer version of a role playing game outside of Fantasyland 2041. You need 32K and a cassette. The movement is done with a joystick and can be done by the keyboard. Remember to get the Datestones out before the time is up!

THE GRAPEVINE

From ACE, Eugene, OR. Microsoft Basic variables are stored each time they are used, rather than once as ATARI BASIC does. Result? Slower handling of variables.

Basic A+ owners- a new disk is available from the dealer for free or from OJSJSJ for \$7 which not only updates present A+ but includes some demos and a game as well. (if any TAIG members have this disk please let the librarian, Jim Dahlberg, know.)

PASCAL will be available from APX this summer, it will compile to 6502 code! Price? Less than \$50! (anyone want to start a PASCAL interest group?)

To JACG: Anyone tried the light pen in COMPUTE, March '81, pg.36?

NOTE: Newsletters from other ATARI groups are available for reference from our TAIG library, they often have very interesting material in them. Sorry but they cannot be checked out without an act of Congress.

Review of Le Shhhtick

or

How to sprain a wrist

No, the title above is not a paid advertisement by Datasoft. I will try to give you an unbiased review of this unique piece of hardware. Le Shhhtick is a new generation of joystick available for your Atari computer. Mercury switches and no base makes it different. That right! No base, just a stick. The fire button is located on top of the stick. The whole thing resembles a type of fighter control stick. All you have to do is tilt it the direction you wish to go. Usually a 20 degree angle will do. You might be wondering how hard it is to hold it upright without moving. It is pretty difficult, I must admit. But, Datasoft, in its infinite wisdom designed the unit so that if you squeeze it, the computer will read it as an upright joystick. It doesn't matter where it is tilted. You do have to be careful that you don't get too excited while playing Star Raider, you might squeeze it a little hard. While we're talking about Star Raider, I would enthusiastically recommend it. However, it doesn't work too well with precision placement games and moving around in adventure games. Le Shhhtick costs \$39.95 retail. While you decide whether to rush out and buy one, I'll go back to Star Raider and see if I can get star commander without spraining my wrist doing tricky twists.

For Sale 16K RAM  -Call Tim RayKowski 776-3382

"Smootherers of the Lost Arc", p. 86.

A report on Siggraph. Possible future for Atari graphics. Puts GTIA to shame

"Celestial Music", p. not telling.

Awful, I must of made a mistake typing it in.

"Outposts: Atari", p.212.

I've noticed that it comes before Apple Cart now! Expose on Antic mode 14, 159x191 4 color graphics mode. With software that allows you to use it. The same graphics mode the arcade Missile Command was written in. Someone should upgrade the home version using this graphics mode.

VOYAGE OF STAR SHIP HERMAN

or

A Review of Sands of Mars

S.S. Herman is a ship on a launch pad waiting to take off on an exploration and rescue mission to the planet Mars. You start at J.F.K. Space Port with a large amount of money. It will be needed to buy your equipment and men. After wisely spending your money, you will then board your ship and take off. Taking off is done in text and all you see is the console. However, after leaving Earth's atmosphere, you can move around in space in graphic text mode. The best part of this is the scrolling on the screen. It is not fine or smooth scrolling. There are several things in deep space to keep your interest, but, I won't spoil it for you by describing it. When you find Mars you land on it and explore. All movement is done by joystick. Be careful, the monsters are very ferocious. Find Dr. Grady and solve the mystery written in the sands. I was deeply disappointed with this program. First, it seemed inferior to the Apple version. The manual was written for an Apple. Special instructions were given on a sheet thrown in the package. Second, when you lose something to pirates (sorry) they sometimes take something you don't have to begin with. Third, the mystery was too easy. You need 40K and a disk drive to play this. It was written by Crystal Computer and comes on two disks for \$39.95. I wouldn't recommend it unless you are a space game freak.

STAR TREK 3.5

What can you say about the best star trek game on the market? The program was written by Lance Micklaus of Adventure International. It cost me \$15.00 but, I think A.I. raised it to \$20.00. Believe me, it is still worth it. It comes on a cassette with a disk version included. The program is written in basic and is fast moving. I would suggest you get it for your library if you have 32K. Down with the Klingons!!!

TWINCITY
A T A R I
INTEREST GROUP

6824 QUEEN AVE. SO.
RICHFIELD, MN 55423

TAIG Meeting Notice
Sunday February 28, 6:00 p.m.
Minnesota Federal Savings & Loan
31 9th St., Hopkins

Jim Dahlberg will speak on I/O before the meeting. Also featured
will be a GITA and Votrax Type and Talk.

